

March 27, 2017

Judge Cooper,

With respect to my sentence, it is my wish to defer to the desires of the victims' families. I will not dispute any sentence they deem appropriate.

My explanation for this decision is simply that it's the right thing to do. After February 2, 1996, I dragged the victims, their families, the Court, and the community through a painful and expensive process. That never should have happened. I am almost as ashamed of my decision to undergo a trial as I am of my decision to commit the shooting itself. While I cannot undo the past, I have control of what I do now. I would prefer to be respectful rather than self-serving.

This decision is not one I take lightly. I have felt this way for years. It is true that in August of 2016, I permitted my attorney to argue for a concurrent sentence. I did this because I wanted to keep my options open. I was open to the possibility that the victims and their families did not strongly oppose my release. I have subsequently learned otherwise. I would prefer to respect their wishes.

I've never apologized for what I've done. I didn't because I feared that trying to apologize after doing something so terrible would only add insult to injury. If that feeling was wrong, I'm sorry for not speaking before. I'm sorry for denying people what they deserve to hear.

I wish I only owed one apology. A measure of the horror I've caused is that I owe much more than I can ever repay, and have much more for which to apologize. All I can do is ensure my apologies aren't empty.

Arnie Fritz could have created something. Manuel Vela could have created something. They could have cured diseases or invented things. Even more, they could have just been there for their friends and families. That alone was something precious that never should have been taken away. That it was, that I have taken it, is enough to condemn me. They would have had wives and children. Their families loved them, and their families should be with them. By now they should have built lifetimes of memories together. That hasn't happened, and it's my fault it hasn't.

Leona Caires did achieve things. She made the world better. That should have continued. She should have been there to watch and help her family grow. Her children and grandchildren should have felt her pride in them. She should still be there to dispense advice, to help her family through any troubles they had.

Like the other victims in that classroom, Natalie Hintz experienced horror. While what Jon Lane did it was undisputedly heroic, I believe Natalie Hintz's actions during and after the shooting were more so. I was a coward; I have no conception of the bravery that it took for her to endure what she did. But that bravery never should have been tested in the first place. She never should have gone through what she has. I'm sorry. I'm sorry for every moment of pain, everything she had to endure.